

Elections show Denmark split on European Union

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The European elections gave further evidence that official politics in Denmark is dominated by xenophobia and polarised between pro and anti European Union positions. Protest against declining living standards is trapped behind the "anti-EU" campaigns of the right and left. Less than 50 percent of those eligible to vote did so, and those that did elected 6 (out of 16) candidates for recently formed, or transformed, anti-EU parties.

Of the remaining 10 seats, the ruling social democrats of the SPD retained the three seats it held from 1994 with only a marginal decline in its share of the vote. The most significant change was the collapse of the Conservative vote, from 17.7 percent to 8.5 percent, with the loss of two of their three seats. The Conservatives worked with the European People's Party in the European parliament. The beneficiaries were the liberal Venstre party which, while it supports Danish membership of the single currency, has a distinctly Eurosceptic tinge to its pronouncements, emphasising Danish national independence.

Also significant was the first election of an extreme right-wing Danish Peoples Party MEP to the Strasbourg parliament—Mogens Camre, until recently a member of the social democrats. The DPP won 5.8 percent of the vote. Camre recently left the SPD after protests over his racist outbursts finally became too much for the governing party. He was an SPD MP for 19 years.

The DPP emerged in 1995 as a modernised and supposedly more acceptable right-wing anti-immigrant party than its predecessor, the Progress Party, which has now all but ceased to exist.

Three seats were won by the June Movement and one by the Danish Peoples Movement (DPM) against the EU. The latter was formed in the 1960s in opposition to Danish moves to join the then European Economic

Community. At the time the movement emphasised workers' rights, gender issues, called for Danish "self-determination" and supported more co-operation between Denmark and the other Scandinavian countries. It won four European seats in the first European elections in 1979 and formed the largest Danish political group.

In the 90s, the DPM has been eclipsed by the June Movement (JM)—a somewhat looser group with an equally anti-EU line. The organisation is so called in celebration of the June 1992 referendum in Denmark, when membership of the EU was rejected, although a subsequent referendum reversed the decision. The JM has particularly won support amongst a layer of ex-radicals in Denmark, despite its openly anti-immigrant propaganda. A JM poster prior to the 1998 Danish Referendum on the Amsterdam Treaty, referring to the open border policy within the EU, trumpeted "Hello to 40 million Poles".

The MEP elected by the Socialist Peoples Party (SPP), Pernille Frahm, is the most explicitly anti-EU candidate from a party that is deeply divided on the issue. The SPP, ex-Stalinists who split from Moscow in 1959, also recently changed their policy to support the Danish monarchy and offered their hand in coalition government, should the position of the SPD and Radical Party alliance become unstable.



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